

# Creating an Imaginary Context: Teacher's Use of Embodied Enactments in Addressing Learner Initiatives in a Beginner-Level Adult ESOL Classroom

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Previous research (e.g. Waring 2011) has illustrated that learner initiatives have the potential to generate learning opportunities in second language (L2) classrooms. Despite a small body of recent research (e.g. Sert 2015) indicating that teacher's responses to learner initiatives play a significant role in facilitating learning opportunities in teacher-student interactions, more work is needed to understand the resources teachers draw upon in their responses. This study contributes to this by examining how a teacher employs what we term 'embodied enactments' as a pedagogical tool to contingently respond to learner initiatives. Using Conversation Analysis, we examine a single case taken from a corpus of video data collected in a beginner-level adult English for Speakers of Other Languages classroom in the United States. The findings reveal that the teacher contingently and multimodally enacts imaginary contexts which help students to understand how the target vocabulary and phrases can be used in everyday life. In doing this, the teacher and students are bridging the gap between classroom discourse and language use outside of the classroom, and provides interactional space for promoting L2 learning.

**Keywords:** learner initiatives; enactments; conversation analysis; ESOL classroom interaction; embodied conduct

## Introduction

A 'learner initiative' is 'an uninvited contribution' to the ongoing classroom discourse Waring (2011: 204). Previous research (e.g. Fagan 2012; Garton 2002, 2012; Sert 2015,

2017; Waring 2011) has suggested that learner initiatives may constitute an important opportunity for learning in the second language (L2) classroom and that research can aid language teaching by identifying the most effective strategies for responding to such practices. However, there remains a lack of research looking at how students initiate their own turn or have control over topic selection, and also the role of teacher responses in determining whether learner initiatives will become an opportunity for learning or not (Jacknick 2009; Waring 2011). More specifically, we are aware of no research to date which has investigated how *beginner-level* ESOL students attempt to initiate uninvited responses, and how the teacher responds to these initiatives in order to facilitate L2 learning in the classroom. In particular, this study is original in its contribution to developing an understanding of the resources that beginner-level students, with a limited L2 repertoire, draw upon in producing initiatives, as well as the resources used by language teachers in providing responses to these learner initiatives.

Adding to the existing literature on L2 classroom interaction research, this study employs Conversation Analysis (CA) to first briefly analyse how a beginning-level ESOL student initiates a hypothetical scenario to facilitate her clarification request, and primarily focuses on how her ESOL teacher engages in what we call ‘embodied enactments’ to enhance the comprehensibility of her verbal response to learner initiatives, and aid in the generation of opportunities for the students to learn.

Additionally, in line with the overall general trend in interaction analytic research, which has undergone an ‘embodied turn’ (Nevile 2015) in recent years, L2 classroom interaction research has seen an increased focus on the role of embodied action in language classrooms, and a review of recent literature would suggest that the main focus has been on ‘gesture’. We expand upon this body of work by examining the way in which students and teachers can draw upon embodied resources in the

production of 'embodied enactments'; that is, playing out hypothetical scenarios, verbally and physically, in order to initiate clarification requests (in the case of the students) or produce explanations in response (in the case of the teacher), and in doing so, bridge the gap between classroom discourse and interaction outside of the language classroom. We argue that these observations are significant for research as well as language teaching practice, as they can provide insights for language teachers into how to effectively respond to beginner-level students' initiatives, and into how to effectively use resources other than just talk when doing so.

In the following sections, the key concepts employed in this study – learner initiatives, learning opportunities, and embodied enactments - will be discussed.

### **Learner Initiatives and Learning Opportunities**

Teacher-fronted interaction has been a key area of classroom interaction research, with the majority of studies investigating teacher talk and how teachers can create and facilitate learning opportunities in the classroom. However, to date, there is a lack of classroom interaction research investigating teacher-fronted interaction and its potential for learning from the perspective of students' contributions (Garton 2012; Jacknick 2009). It has been argued that classroom interaction research tends to explore student talk in 'discrete pieces' (Markee 1995: 98) and neglects the context of interaction, such as whether students self-select to initiate a new sequence or have control of the topic selection over the teacher. Learner initiatives have the potential to lead to learning opportunities, and recently there has been an increase in CA studies exploring this relationship (Garton 2012; Jacknick 2011; Sert 2017; Waring 2008, 2011). Research on learner initiatives, reviewed below, requires further development if we are to fully understand how teachers can best respond to these initiatives, according to a range of

contextual factors (such as students' proficiency level).

### ***Research on Learner Initiatives***

As noted above, much classroom interaction research has traditionally focussed on the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence. This is despite that fact that, as Allwright (1980: 166) noted, 'learners are not wholly under the control of the teacher [...] they have some freedom concerning the nature and extent of their participation in class'. Evidence of this can be seen in what researchers have labelled 'learner initiatives', which Waring has defined as 'any learner attempt to make an uninvited contribution to the ongoing talk', where 'uninvited may refer to (1) not being specifically selected as the next speaker or (2) not providing the expected response when selected' (2011: 204). This also reinforces Jacknick's (2011) argument that by actively participating and contributing to the understandings of the issues raised in the classroom, students are taking ownership of their own learning process. Researchers are generally in agreement that this is a very positive feature of classroom interaction; for example, Walsh (2002: 12) argued, 'confirmation checks and requests for clarification are to be encouraged not only from teacher to learners, but more importantly, from learners to teacher'. Therefore, learner-initiated responses play an important role in creating opportunities for students to produce more diverse utterances, and so can lead to increased opportunities for language learning. This phenomenon conforms to the socio-cultural perspective of language learning as participation (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000).

A number of studies have investigated learner-initiated interactions in the classroom by using CA (e.g. Markee, 1995). More recently, in a study of unsolicited student's participation, Jacknick (2009: 69) described the three main sequential environments in which unsolicited student's participation can be found: (1) 'following

other student initiatives', (2) 'within teacher turn-in-progress' and (3) 'at activity boundaries'. In particular, types two and three are doing the difficult work of redirecting teacher talk and introducing a new topic or reintroducing the previous one. In so doing, Jacknick observed, they prevented the teacher from proceeding the plan of the lesson. Similarly, based on her analysis of 14 hours of ESL classroom interaction, Waring (2011) produced what she called a 'typology' of learner initiatives, with three main types: 'initiating sequence', 'volunteering response', and 'exploiting assigned turn'.

Regardless of the type of learner initiative, it has been suggested, through sequential analyses, that they can lead to learning opportunities. For example, in an earlier study, Waring's (2009) demonstrated how an ESOL student (Miyuki) managed to 'move out' of the teacher's uninterrupted IRF sequence in order to maximise her opportunities to initiate negotiations with the teacher. By interpreting the teacher, Miyuki successfully encouraged the teacher to abandon his/her own teaching agenda and attend to Miyuki's question regarding the use of present perfect tense. Although this student-initiated turn might slow down the delivery of the lesson plan, Waring found that it created a space for both the teachers and students to gain a more in-depth understanding of the usage of the present perfect tense.

### ***Summary***

Away from CA-based classroom interaction studies, it is broadly agreed that a classroom is an 'acquisition-rich environment' when students are provided the opportunity to control the discourse (e.g. Ellis 1998). Although learner initiatives play an important role in promoting language learning, there is still a lack of comprehensive understanding of what such initiatives mean, or the most effective ways for teachers to respond to them. Thus, learner initiatives deserve further study from pedagogical and theoretical perspectives. In this study, we will briefly revisit learner initiatives by

examining the verbal and non-verbal features of one case, and then examines how the teacher provides an explanation in the form of an 'embodied enactment' of a hypothetical scenario in response to learner initiatives. In order to set the scene for our analyses, it is then necessary to also consider previous research on teacher's response to learner initiatives.

## **Teacher's Response to Learner Initiatives**

### ***Research on Teacher's Response to Learner Initiatives***

Since learner initiatives can potentially promote L2 learning in the classrooms, it is important for classroom interaction research to analyse how learner initiatives are responded by teachers to promote learning opportunities; indeed it is generally agreed by researchers who employ a CA approach to the study of classroom interaction that teacher's responses to learner initiatives can determine whether learning opportunities may subsequently, contingently, emerge (e.g. Jacknick 2011; Garton 2012; Sert 2015; Waring 2008). Research has shown that teachers can respond to learner initiatives in a number of ways, ranging from attempting to handle it as quickly as possible in order to move on with the planned activity, to treating the initiative from the student as a learning opportunity and consequently including it into the lesson plan, or changing the planned lesson entirely (e.g. Garton 2012); responding with ironic teasing or invoking student orientation (Waring et al. 2016); or foregrounding achievement and addressing correction (Fagan 2015).

Although learner initiatives can potentially promote L2 learning, it may not always be considered as positive by the teachers. Some teacher practices in response to learner initiatives have actually been found to constrain students' participation. He's (2004) study demonstrated how a Chinese teacher bypassed a student's topic initiation

to something recognised as beyond the pedagogical focus of the lesson. Similarly, Jacknick (2011) noted that the teacher in her corpus either shut down or bypassed a learner initiative if it was produced in overlap with the teacher's endeavour to begin a new activity. Other studies have also documented how teachers expand or close learner-initiated sequences. Jacknick (2009) identified four types of closed teacher responses to learner-initiated participation – 'no response', 'positive evaluation', 'explanation', and 'attempt to move on' – as well as four types of expandable responses – 'acknowledgment', 'negative evaluation' and 'expansion sequence initiation'. Fagan (2013) also noted how, in his data, the teacher managed to respond to the student's inquiries, which could be straightforwardly answered or might not be in alignment with the teacher's agenda, through (1) displaying the teacher's thought process when figuring out how to respond to a student's question and (2) offering reasons to maintain, explain and differentiate the pedagogical goals. The teacher also managed to respond to the student's questions, which were non-problematic student assertions or they could be answered easily, by 'doing answer' and 'doing acknowledging with or without minimal elaboration'.

### ***The Nature of Teacher's Explanation Sequences***

This study will focus on explanations as responses to learner initiatives, particularly detailing one teacher's practice for responding to learner initiatives as they emerge *in situ*. Research on explanations in classrooms often have examined teacher-led explanations (e.g. Lazaraton 2004; Mortensen 2011), as well as teacher's explanations in response to learner initiatives (e.g. Merke 2016; Sert 2017). All such studies have noted that explanations are not just produced verbally: Mortensen (2011) and Sert (2015) both noted the importance of prosody in highlighting words being explained. Additionally, the embodied elements of such explanation activities have received

significant analytic attention. For example, in the first study to lament the lack of attention given by analysts to the nonverbal elements of explanations, Lazaraton (2004) demonstrated how teachers provided vocabulary explanations by acting out concepts like 'tiptoe' and 'charades' using their entire body. Additionally, recent research has identified the functions of teacher gestures in teaching an L2 in the context of L2 classroom interactions. Sert (2017) demonstrated how a teacher's use of an iconic gesture (pointing to self and an imaginary other) was employed to aid an explanation. Also, Matsumoto and Dobs (2017) observed that both teacher and students regularly used abstract deictic and metaphoric gestures as resources for teaching and learning aspect and tense in grammar lessons. Similarly, Eskildsen and Wagner examined "the coupling of specific linguistic items with specific gestures... over time" (2015: 268) for words such as 'under' and 'over'.

The collaborative nature of explanation sequences has also been widely acknowledged, both by Mortensen (2011) and later by Belhiah (2013), who also suggested that embodied conduct is a key part of being an explanation-*recipient*, with gesture replication and/or co-production employed to display alignment and understanding. Further, researchers examining explanations in response to learner initiatives have argued that teachers' use of embodied resources, such as gestures, in explanation sequences can facilitate students' understanding of the target language (i.e. enhance learning opportunities) (e.g. Sert 2017; Sert and Walsh 2013; Waring et al. 2013).

### ***The Role of Embodied Resources in Explanation Sequences***

Another perspective suggested in these studies is that, while embodied resources are invariably drawn upon in producing explanations, the form of such embodied conduct may vary. And this variation may depend upon the target language to be explained; as

Waring et al. (2013) observed:

‘there is, in other words, a relationship between the what and the how of vocabulary explanation that may have been under-explored, and developing a firmer grasp of such a relationship... can be potentially useful in specifying the ‘technology’ of vocabulary explanation. (p.262)

We intend to contribute to these observations through our examination of what we are calling ‘embodied enactments as explanations’. As we will argue, this is an extension of earlier L2 classroom interaction research on the use of ‘embodied explanations (e.g. Sert 2015, 2017) by considering enactments as a distinct form of interactional and embodied conduct.

Wilkinson et al. (2010: 58) defined enactment as ‘the employment by participants of direct reported speech (DRS) and/or behaviour such as the use of gesture/body movement and/or prosody to depict to recipients some aspect(s) of a reported scene or event’. By employing DRS, which means the reproduction of the talk or thought in a conversation (Holt 1996), a speaker can generate ‘a version of not only what was said but how it was produced through prosody, voice quality, body movement, and linguistic selections’ (Kasper and Prior 2015: 244). This allows the interlocutors to use non-verbal and embodied resources to create the authenticity and immediacy of the reported scenes or events (Holt and Clift 2007). In examining what he termed *reenactments* (our emphasis), Sidnell (2006) made a distinction between those and other kinds of tellings, in that “reenactments involve representations or depictions” (p. 337) as opposed to being purely descriptive. Similarly, Good (2015) noted how previous events witnessed by participants might not only be verbally reported, but also physically enacted. Nevertheless, it is important to note that enactments do not have to only pertain to representing actual events from the past; we follow the work of Holt

(2007), who examined enactments of hypothetical events (in the case of her research, talk or thought).

### **Gaps in Research on Teacher's Responses to Learner Initiatives**

To our knowledge, there is little or no L2 classroom interaction research which has examined enactments in this way. However, previous studies have used CA to examine enactments in a range of contexts and for a range of purposes, including demonstrations of planned future actions in collaborative lesson planning (Leyland 2016), 'body quoting' in dance teaching (Keevallik 2010), making analytical observations in CA data sessions (Tutt and Hindmarsh 2011), and advice-giving in a range of settings (Sandlund 2014). Finally, arguably with the most resonance to this present study, Wilkinson et al. (2010) examined enactments by individuals with aphasia, arguing that the participants use nonverbal and embodied resources in lieu of the limited lexical and grammatical resources at their disposal.

Through our analyses, we aim to illustrate the nature of the teacher's explanations in the context of this classroom as beginner-level, and the pragmatic nature of the target language explanation as opposed to meaning-based explanation. Additionally, while these previous studies have mostly focused on the use of iconic or metaphoric explanations in support of verbal explanations, what we see in this data is something somewhat different: the teacher providing an explanation through the 'embodied enactment' of a hypothetical situation. This is a further development of the previous research on both teacher's responses to learner initiatives, and on the resources teachers draw upon in providing explanations to students.

### **The Data**

The data for this study are drawn from a large corpus of data, known as The Multimedia Adult English Learner Corpus, managed by Portland State University. The video-recorded classroom data was collected at Portland Community College to allow researchers to investigate L2 acquisition and pedagogy in relation to adult students of English. The full corpus consists of over 4,000 hours of classroom interaction, recorded using six cameras and five microphones in the classrooms.

The segment of data chosen for this study was collected on 7 January 2002. The teacher was an experienced English language teacher who had studied German and Spanish at university. Four adult students of English were enrolled in the class: three from Latin American countries, and one from Romania. According to the Portland ESOL curricular guidelines (Reder, 2005), it is expected that students at this level 'can say their names and addresses', and that they will 'need help to conduct day to day business and usually have trouble giving or writing personal information independently'.<sup>2</sup>

This study employs CA as the analytic tool to 'discover how participants understand and talk to one another' (Huchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 14). CA, as a qualitative approach, employs naturally occurring interaction as data and every minute detail 'is considered relevant in uncovering participant orientations towards the interaction' (Waring, 2008: 580). Relying on six camera recordings simultaneously allows us to investigate how and when embodied enactments were employed by the teacher to address learner initiatives. Data were transcribed using Jeffersonian CA conventions (2004)<sup>3</sup>, and the initial stage of analysis followed the typical CA stance of 'unmotivated looking'. It soon became apparent that learner initiatives and the teacher's responses to these initiatives were the key interactional features in that ESOL classroom, not least because of the limited linguistic resources shared between the

teacher and the students – the teacher occasionally displayed understanding of the Spanish produced by the students, but tended to use only English; conversely, while the students demonstrated some ability to understand the teacher’s English, the English they were able to produce was somewhat limited. Additionally, and accordingly, the teacher’s responses to the learner initiatives clearly drew heavily on embodied conduct, and this was felt worthy of further, detailed, analyses.

A single case analysis approach is adopted in this study to undertake an in-depth turn-by-turn analysis of a single sequence of interaction. The goal of conducting a single case analysis in this study is to accomplish what Mori (2004: 536) referred to 'as promoting the overall sensitivity to the intricacy of classroom talk and generate critical reflections on classroom policies and instructional designs'. The specific aim of this study is to gain a detailed understanding of the possibilities of employing embodied enactments as a pedagogical strategy to respond to learner initiatives in an L2 classroom.

## **Analysis**

### ***Learners Initiatives***

Immediately prior to the beginning of Extract 1, the teacher (T) has been teaching the students how to use the phrase 'excuse me' as a means of requesting interlocutors to repeat their utterance. As Extract 1 begins, T appears to be ready to close the prior sequence and make a transition to the next activity (as suggested by her use of 'okay?', line 71). However, before she can continue, one of the students (S3) takes the floor, unprompted.

### **Extract 1a: Using the phrase ‘Excuse me’ on the bus**



A fairly lengthy pause of 1.2 seconds follows, in which T opts not to speak further, which allows S3 to elaborate on her question. Then, S3 announces “I am uh in bus” (line 80). Based upon the sequential position of this utterance, and the visible fact that S3 is not currently on a bus, this is clearly hearable as the introduction of a hypothetical scenario. After the teacher displays her continued listenership and 'cooperative stance' (Goodwin 2007) with 'um hm' at line 82, S3 goes on. At this stage, as she continues her verbal explanation, S3 additionally produces an embodied enactment of what she is describing; with the verbal production, 'when I sentarme (sit down)', she stands up and immediately holds position with her knees slightly bent, as if she is about to sit down. She then pauses briefly (line 85), before producing 'sorry' at the same point as sitting back down in her chair. The pause at line 85 appears to punctuate that the talk is now moving from a description of the hypothetical scenario to a production of what would be said in that scenario. Further, this 'sorry' can be seen as produced for an imaginary interlocutor, with gaze not directed towards the teacher, or any or participant actually co-present in the classroom (e.g. Thompson and Suzuki 2014). In Goffman's (1981) terminology, S3 is the animator (i.e. the individual who produces the utterance), principal (i.e. the individual who is socially responsible for the content of the utterance) and the author (i.e. the individual who constructs the utterance) of hypothetical frame. As Goffman (1981) argued, the change of footing refers to how interactants change their orientation of the frame for events that they are participating in. Through shifting the footing from the instructional frame to the hypothetical frame, it allows S3 to better explain her initiative to T, who becomes the official recipient of these utterance.

**Extract 1b: Using the word 'sorry' on the bus**

88 S3: or (0.2) excuse me [hahaha]  
 89 T: [hahaha]  
 90 (0.2)  
 91 S3: +yo: confundido  
       I (am) confused  
       +S3 pointing to herself  
 92 (0.7)  
 93 S3: sorry and [ excuse me ]  
 94 T: [ >okay um hm< ]  
 95 (0.3)  
 96 T: um hm okay  
 97 + (4.1)  
       +T goes towards the whiteboard and writes something down.  
       +S2 raises her thumb in front of S3 repeatedly.

Extract 1b is the immediate continuation of Extract 1a. In response to S3's initiation, T produces laughter (line 87), but S3 continues to produce her question ('or excuse me') before producing laughter of her own. Although T's laughter appears to be in response to the question, one can only speculate as to exactly what is being treated as laughable. Regardless, S3 signals the closing of her question, and emphasises the point, by repeating that she is confused, this time in Spanish, with stress on the first-person pronoun 'yo:' ('I'), and accompanied by the deictic gesture of pointing to herself. In the following 0.7 seconds (92), T does not take the floor to provide a response, and subsequently S3 repeats the two target phrases, 'sorry' and 'excuse me' (line 93), presumably to emphasise further the source of her confusion. By doing so, S3 initiated a shift in footing that positioned her as a forthcoming recipient role since she is asking T for clarifications. T eventually utters acknowledgement tokens 'um hm' and 'okay' in line 96 which demonstrates her understanding of S3's inquiry. Immediately after, T turns, moves towards the whiteboard, and begins to write something down. During this time (4.1 seconds, line 97), S3 does not take the floor again, appearing to treat T's actions as projecting that an explanation is about to come, which positioned T in a production role as a forthcoming speaker to address S3's initiative.

Thus, one type of learner initiative was identified and discussed: enacting a hypothetical scenario to facilitate the student's clarification request. Extract 1

demonstrated how S3 employs both her (apparently limited English) verbal resources, as well as use of her body to enact a hypothetical event to the other participants in the class. S3's enactment provides a visual representation of a hypothetical context to allow participants to better understand her inquiry about the difference between the expressions 'excuse me' and 'sorry'.

### *Teacher's Responses to Learner Initiatives*

#### *Embodied Enactment as Explanation*

Extract 2 begins immediately following the end of Extract 1. In this extract, we see how T continues the enactment of a hypothetical scenario initiated by S3 just previously in Extract 1, and also invites S3 to co-enact the scenario together as a way to facilitate the explanation.

#### **Extract 2a: Enacted explanation of the phrase 'sorry' for expressing apology**

099 T: +[okay] (good) example  
 +T writing on the whiteboard  
 100 + (0.4)  
 +T holds hands out, parallel to each other, palms facing upwards, and bends fingers quickly upwards #1

101 T: +>please stand up<  
 +T holds hands out, parallel to each other, palms facing upwards, and bends fingers quickly upwards

102 (0.7)

103 S3: oh (0.2) ya  
 +S3 stands up

104 (.)

105 T: um hm (0.4) so example +>if i am walking↑<  
 +T moves toward S3, swinging arms briefly in an exaggerated straight-arm 'walking' motion #2



#1

106 (0.4)

107 T: and +(uh)  
 +T taps S3's shoulder

108 (0.2)

109 T: +(uh) ↓  
 +T hit S3's shoulder

110 (0.5)

111 T: +oh:: i'm sorry  
 +T touches S3's shoulder and glances at S2

112 +(0.8)  
 +S2 nods



#2

Interactively, T positions herself as the current speaker and S3 as the addressed

recipient, which refers to ‘the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom [...] he expects to turn over his speaking role’ (Goffman, 1981: 133). After T finishes writing on the whiteboard, she makes a request to S3 to ‘>please stand up<’ quickly, making a ‘standing up’ motion with her hands (line 101, figure 1). S3 follows T’s instruction, although at this stage she has not been told why she needs to stand up. T projects that she will provide an explanation to S3’s query through the use of an example (‘so example’, line 105), and then establishes a hypothetical scenario by stating ‘if I am walking↑’ with a stress on the first syllable ‘walk’ and raising intonation on the second syllable ‘ing’, and by physically enacting an iconic walk, with arms swinging briefly (line 105, figure 2). This arm-straight walking gesture displays to S3, and the class as whole, that what is going to come is performative. Additionally, the conditional ‘if’ projects that some further action is to come.

After a 0.4-second pause, T utters ‘and uh↓’ and taps S3’s shoulder in line 107. The ‘and’ indicates that this is a continuation of the turn which begins with ‘so if I am walking’ (line 105), while the ‘uh ↓’ is an enactment of the hypothetical walking scenario. So, T signals a change of the frame for the event (Goffman, 1981) — shifting back and forth between enacting a hypothetical scenario, and describing that scenario. This shift occurs both verbally and physically; T’s action of tapping S3’s shoulder does not appear to be a part of the enactment, but rather to signal to S3 that a staged action, directed at that part of her body, is imminent.

Sure enough, T subsequently does ‘bumping into S3’s shoulder’, as she utters a second theatrical ‘uh↓’ with falling intonation (line 109). Again, this bumping S3’s shoulder has all been framed as a hypothetical scenario, through a combination of enactment and description. By producing an apology ‘I’m sorry’, preceded by a change of state token ‘oh’, which indicates surprise (line 111), T provides an example use of the

target phrase, and thus completes the enactment; the framing of the enactment serves to indicate that this is an appropriate way to use the word 'sorry'. It should be also noted here that when T produces the apology in 111, she first touches S3's shoulder and then engages in a mutual gaze with S2. By looking at S2, this further demonstrates the embodied enactment is not only for S3's benefit, but it has a pedagogical purpose. We can also note that S2 reciprocates this interactive stance (Goodwin, 2007) by performing the role of the addressed recipient as S2 nods in response to the mutual gaze, indicating that S2 treats herself as an addressed recipient. This demonstrates that S2 is 'doing listening'- in other words, she is engaged in her recipient role by attending to the embodied enactment performed by the T.

As shown, in producing the enactment, T switches footing (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 2007) by moving between the hypothetical and instructional frame (Goffman, 1981) to facilitate the vocabulary explanation. In contrast to S3's embodied enactment illustrated in Extract 1, we see in Extract 2 that the teacher's explanation, in the form of this embodied enactment, does not take up S3's initial scenario of sitting on a bus in Extract 1, but rather an alternative hypothetical scenario in which saying 'sorry' is appropriate. This hypothetical frame, according to Goffman (1981), is animated and authored by T and she is the principal of her utterance, being wholly responsible for producing this frame. As such, T can be seen to be orienting to S3's stated general confusion over appropriate uses of 'sorry' and 'excuse me', rather than any specific uses S3 may have with behaving appropriately on a bus.

**Extract 2b: Verbal explanation of the phrases 'excuse me' and 'sorry'**

113 S3: ah: +yeah=  
 +S3 turns her head away from T  
 +T touches S3's shoulder until S3 turns her head away

114 T: +=but +also excuse me  
 +T leans forward towards S3 slightly,  
 touches S3 again and nodding  
 +S3 looks back to T

115 (0.4)

116 S3: excu↓se me↑

117 (0.3)

118 T: +both  
 +T puts hands together in parallel #3

119 +(0.3)  
 +S3 puts hands together in parallel



#3

This extract is the continuation of Extract 2a. At this stage, the embodied enactment is not necessarily complete; S3 could also engage in this enactment, by treating T's 'sorry' as a first pair-part, and by providing a type-fitted response (e.g. 'no problem', 'that's okay' or even a returned 'sorry'). Instead, S3 claims an understanding and indicates receipt of information by producing an elongated change of state token (CoST) and an acknowledgment token in line 113. Simultaneously, S3 turns her head away and averts her gaze from T. T does not treat a response as absent, and thus the embodied enactment is collaboratively brought to a close.

At this point, T could also choose to initiate another embodied enactment, in order to explain the second target phrase 'excuse me' to S3. Instead, T shifts the footing from the hypothetical frame to the instructional frame in order to offer explicit verbal explanation to S3, 'but also, excuse me' (line 114). Simultaneously, T leans towards S3 slightly and touches her shoulder. This shift in footing is recognised by S3 as the T's physical summons attracts S3's attention and reassumes mutual eye gaze. This indicates to S3 that T has not finished her telling. By providing further explicit explanation (lines 113-119, and beyond, not shown), T attempts to relate the phrase 'excuse me' to 'sorry', as had been demonstrated in the embodied enactment.

Although S3 claims an understanding of T's explicit explanation of 'excuse me' (line

113), T voluntarily offers an extended explanation to complement her previous responses to S3's question about the distinction between 'sorry' and 'excuse me'. This leads to S3's display of understanding of the usage of the phrase 'excuse me' to express an apology, and to request clarifications from someone (lines 119-261, described in Author 2017).

*Using Embodied Enactment to Provide Additional Meaning of the Target Phrase*

In Extract 2, it is demonstrated that T explained the usage of 'excuse me' for expressing an apology. After T offers an additional verbal explanation regarding the different intonations of 'excuse me' (described in Author, 2017) to complement her previous explanation, in the form of embodied enactment in Extract 2, T employs embodied enactment again in Extract 3, to further consolidate the meaning of 'excuse me'. In this Extract, S3 first initiates uninvited turns to 'try out' her understanding of the meaning of 'excuse me'. T then employs another embodied enactment to respond to S3's initiative by offering additional information to the class regarding the usage of 'excuse me', this time as a way to express the need to move past someone in a crowd.

**Extract 3a: Enacted explanation of the phrase 'excuse me'**

262 S3: +excuse me↑  
 +T walking towards S3 and S3 is talking to S2

263 (0.4)

264 T: um hm

265 (0.3)

266 S3: +excuse me↑? (.) permiso.  
*excuse me*  
 +S3 turns around and faces S4

267 (0.5)

268 T: yeah (0.2) hahaha

269 (0.3)

270 T: +also  
 +T pointing at S3 with both hands parallel to each other, making  
 beckoning and inviting motion

271 (.)

272 S3: in spanish

273 + (0.4)  
 +S3 stands up

274 T: +please stand up  
 +T both hands are parallel to each other, making beckoning and inviting motion

275 (0.3)

276 S3: (+permiso?)  
*excuse me*  
 +S3 sits down

277 S2: ((inaudible))

278 (.)

279 S3: yup

280 (0.2)

281 T: um hm (0.5) +please stand up  
 +T both hands are parallel to each other, making beckoning  
 and inviting motion

282 (0.5)

283 S3: +ya  
 +S3 stands up

284 (0.5)

285 T: +example  
 +T pointing at S3

286 (0.6)

287 S3: oh (0.3) [example]

288 T: +[I want to] go  
 +T pointing at S3

289 + (0.9)  
 +T spreads out her right arm forward #4

290 T: +excuse me↓

291 +T touching S3's shoulder  
 (0.2)



#4

This extract begins as S3 utters 'excuse me' (line 262), which the teacher appears to confirm with an agreement token 'um hm' (line). S3 then turns around to S4, a fellow student sitting behind her, and again utters 'excuse me' without being invited by the teacher, with the exact same intonation, this time adding a Spanish translation 'permiso'. It is not clear whether this is designed to inform S4, or to further check her understanding with a fellow L1 Spanish speaker. However, S4 does not respond and instead, T confirms again, 'yeah' (line 268). The additional laughter may be an

indication of the marked nature of response to a turn apparently designed for another participant.

As in Extract 2, T then attempts to invite S3 to stand up by uttering 'please stand up' in line 274, as well as pointing to S3 and making an inviting motion (lines 270 and 274). This is preceded by 'also' (line 270) which indicates to S3 that T is planning to switch footing and take over the floor as the speaker in order to provide further information about the target phrase being initiated by S3. However, S3 stands up from her seat after initiating her turn in line 272 by uttering 'in spanish'. S3 does not wait for further instruction from T, but instead opts to embark into her own, brief, embodied enactment in lines 272 and 275-276, to illustrate how she will use the phrase to seek for permission to take a seat in a hypothetical scenario. By doing so, S3 takes the initiative to switch footing and act as the principal, author and animator of the hypothetical frame (Goffman, 1981). S3 first utters 'in spanish' (line 272) which projects that she is about to launch an enactment of how to use Spanish when sitting next to someone on a bus. S3 then looks at S1, utters 'permiso' (line 276), sits down. She then looks back to the teacher, states 'yup', and produces a brief turn of both hands, placing palms upwards. This appears to indicate the end of the enactment.

T acknowledges S3's enactment with 'um hm' (line 281), and repeats her instruction, 'please stand up', again making an upwards rising motion with her hands. The shift in footing is recognised and reciprocated by S3 when S3 utters 'ya' and follows the instruction physically by standing up (line 279), which suggests attention to the teacher's talk and gesture. After a 0.5-second pause, T utters 'example' and points at S3 with both hands (line 285), which both works as an account for why S3 has been asked to stand up again, and also projects that a further embodied enactment is coming. T then establishes a new imaginary context to S3 by saying 'I want to go' (line 288) and

physically spreading out her right arm forward (line 289, figure 4) to indicate her walking direction, similar to the performative 'walking' action used in Extract 2. The use of both verbal explanation and hand gesture signals to the class that T's forthcoming action will be performative. T touches S3's shoulder and utters 'excu↑se me↓' (line 290), which represents the shift of footing from an explanation frame to the hypothetical frame itself. By producing a request (line 290) at the same time as touching S3's shoulder, T employs the target phrase and displays to the class that 'excuse me' can be used appropriately in such a hypothetical context, i.e. when one needs to move past somebody in a crowd. It needs to be noted that the constructions of embodied enactments in Extracts 2 and 3 share similar patterns: T is the animator, author and principal of this hypothetical frame (Goffman, 1981) and S3 becomes the addressed recipient of T's embodied enactment. Such collaborative effort in co-constructing the embodied enactments in addressing learner initiatives is different from Extract 1, where S3 is the sole animator, author and principal of the hypothetical scenario 'on the bus', with the aim of allowing T to better understand her initiative.

**Extract 3b: Continued embodied enactment to explain the use of 'excuse me'**

292 S3: +o:kay (0.3) +ah (1.3) +you're (1.3) +yo que me dirías?  
*what would you say to me?*

+S3 moves to the right to allow space for T to walk through #5

+S3 walks to the front; T turns to S3

+S3 turns to T

+S3 using both hands to point to herself repeatedly



#5

293 (0.5)

294 T: +excu ↑ se +(0.3) +excu ↑ se me ↓ (0.4) +hahahaha

+T moves her hands to the side #6

+T spreads out her right arm forward

+T taps S3's shoulder

+S3 moves to the left to allow T to go through #7

+T turns to S3



#6



#7

295 S3: +yeah (0.4) (°okay°)

+S3 turns to T

296 (0.8)

Extract 3b is the immediate continuation of Extract 3a. In line 292, S3 follows T's request by uttering 'o:kay' and moving to the right to provide space for T to walk past (figure 5), which, as an appropriate response to the enacted request, demonstrates that S3 is this time also engaged in the embodied enactment. Here, S3's production of action is interactive footing as S3's animated action is a demonstration of her understanding of T's previous action. S3, however, continues with a change of state token 'ah', which would appear to move footing by 'stepping out' of the hypothetical frame (Goffman, 1981). She then goes on to seek clarifications, after a 1.3-second pause, first by briefly glancing at S2 and then looking at T and asking, in Spanish, 'yo que me dirías' ('what would you say to me') at line 292. This suggests that S3 has not fully understood the

purpose of using 'excuse me' to request people to move aside.

At this point, similar to Extract 2, T has the option to initiate another enactment to explain the target phrase, or to provide an explicit verbal explanation to S3. It is noticeable that after a 0.5-second pause, T does not offer explicit feedback to S3's clarification request. Rather, T chooses to bring S3 back into the hypothetical frame (Goffman, 1981) by repeating the previous enactment in order to respond to S3's clarification request (line 294). This demonstrates that T does not endorse S3's signalled intention to exchange to another interactive frame. In order to remain in the same hypothetical frame, T first moves her hands to the side to again make a symbolic, theatrical, gesture of creating space (figure 6), then spreads out her arms forward and simultaneously utters 'excuse', which again draws the S3's attention to her walking direction. T touches S3's shoulder and simultaneously says 'excuse me' again (line 294), followed by laughter, which S3 responds to by moving to the left, creating space for T to walk past (figure 7). S3's physical response to T indicates that she is actively fulfilling her recipient role since S3 is not only a passive recipient who merely receives clarifications from T but also co-constructing the enactment with T. This also leads to a verbal acknowledgment from S3, 'yeah' as well as returned laughter (line 295). The laughter presumably does not comprise part of the enactment, but is rather a display of the non-serious nature of moving past one another in this manner which creates a jocular learning environment (Bell, 2005).

As shown in Extract 3, the learner initiatives showcase S3's understanding of the meaning of 'excuse me'. By employing another embodied enactment and avoiding the exchange to another interactive frame, T offers additional vocabulary explanations to the class which complements their existing knowledge about the target phrase.

*Attending to the Embodied-Enactment-as-Explanation as Resources for Learning*

The following extract is the continuation of Extract 3b. Although S3 claims her understanding of the meaning of ‘excuse me’ in Extract 3b by uttering a verbal acknowledgement ‘yeah’ in line 295, based on the data presented thus far (Extracts 2 and 3), there is no evidence of uptake which illustrates S3’s ability to use ‘excuse me’ spontaneously and accurately in her own utterance (Sert, 2017). Nevertheless, evidence for learning can be observed in this extract when S3 continues the enactment, which was initiated in Extract 3a, with a tone of playfulness to illustrate her understanding of ‘excuse me’ for asking people to move aside. In order to respond to S3’s initiative, T appropriates S3’s initiated enactment and takes the enactment further in a playful manner.

**Extract 4: Continuing with the embodied enactment in a humorous manner**

297 T: +it's +(phw) +(0.2) hahaha  
 +S3 walks back to her seat  
 +T's hand gestures indicating the pushing #8  
 +T repeats the same pushing gesture



#8

298 S3: +(kek)=  
 +S3 moves her lower part of her body from the front #9 to the back #10



#9



#10

299 T: =right (0.2) [hahaha]  
 300 S3: [hahaha]=  
 301 S2: +=<it's okay>=  
 +S2 touching S3's right arm  
 302 S3: +=teacher (0.6) +no excuse me, hahahaha  
 +S3 pointing at T

+S3 moves her hand from front #11 to the back #12



#11



#12

303 (0.3)  
 304 T: just +(phw) go hahaha (0.5) okay  
 ((producing a noise))  
 +T lifts her right hand upward #13



#13

305 S3: +hahahaha=  
 +S3 sitting down  
 306 T: =good (0.8) alright

T then indicates the completion of the enactment, by providing a verbal explanation to S3 (line 297). This represents the shift back to the instructional frame. It is noticeable that T does not provide a 'formal' verbal explanation to the class; after T utters 'it's' in line 297, T produces a noise to imitate the sound of pushing and simultaneously enacts a 'pushing' gesture (figure 8) to reinforce that 'excuse me' can be used to ask people to

move aside. It is also worth noting here that in line 298, S3 takes over the floor and initiates an uninvited turn and appears to demonstrate her understanding of T's explanation by mirroring T's production of a 'pushing' noise and moving her lower part of her body from the front to the back to illustrate the 'pushing' posture (figures 9 and 10). This demonstrates that S3 shifts the footing from the instructional frame to the humorous frame by acting as the principal, author and animator of the enactment. This also suggests that S3 is attending to T's embodied-enactment-as-explanation as relevant resources for learning the target phrase. T is positioned as the addressed recipient and reciprocated this shift in footing by acknowledging S3's display of understanding. This is seen when T utters 'right' in line 299, which is followed by laughter from both. The laughter indicates that S3's 'pushing' posture reveals a sense of playfulness that transforms the classroom context into a more jocular learning environment (Bell 2005). This is further evidenced when S3 attempts to continue the enactment, which was initiated in Extract 3a, in a playful manner. By addressing to the teacher 'teacher, no excuse me' (line 302), S3 treats the prior 'excuse me' as a request which she is rejecting, followed by an iconic gesture of indicating disapproval (figures 11 and 12). In closing this turn with laughter, S3 appears to be claiming/joking that she will not move aside for the teacher in this imagined scenario. T aligns with S3's initiated enactment by instilling a tone of playfulness in her response as a way to sustain this humorous frame. This is shown when T utters 'phew' to imitate the sound of pushing and physically enacts a symbolic and theatrical gesture in an exaggerated manner by lifting her right hand upward (figure 13) to indicate the action of pushing people in the crowd. T also produces laughter tokens, in line 305, which S3 again returns, before closing the sequence.

In continuing the embodied enactment in this way, S3 has not only demonstrated that she has understood the pedagogical aim of the enactment (namely, that 'excuse me' can be used as a request to pass somebody), but has also employed her limited English repertoire in order to take the enactment further, in a humorous manner. In contrast to the embodied enactments shown in Extracts 2 and 3 where S3 is invited by T to assume a hypothetical role, Extract 4 illustrates that S3 plays a more active role in self-initiating an embodied enactment to create an opportunity for herself to display her understanding of the meaning of 'excuse me'.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### ***Discussion***

This paper has illustrated and analysed the use of embodied enactments in a language classroom, first as employed in learner initiatives when a student seeks clarification (Extract 1), and then as teacher's responses, in the form of explanations, to learner initiatives (Extracts 2, 3 and 4).

The use of embodied enactments may have parallels with Olsher's work on 'embodied completions' (2004), when L2 users and the teacher employ gestural resources to complete turns which they are seemingly unable to complete verbally. However, there is also no shortage of similar phenomena in L1 interaction literature; such enactments have been identified in CA research exploring storytelling sequences (e.g. Good 2015), which 'not only portrays a story event more vividly but it also places the story recipient as witness to the enacted scene and enables him to evaluate the event independently' (Kasper and Prior 2015: 243). Furthermore, in the sequence examined, the sharing of the hypothetical 'on the bus' event allows S3 to extend the discussion to gain a better understanding of using 'excuse me' and 'sorry' in different contexts, and in

so doing, play out how this language might be employed outside of the classroom, thus 'bridging the gap' between classroom discourse and language use outside of the classroom.

This analysis builds on previous research on learner initiatives by revealing that beginner-level students with a low-level of L2 proficiency are also able to actively initiate uninvited turns in this traditionally teacher-fronted interaction to negotiate space for voicing their questions or statements. By actively taking the initiative to seek and contribute to understanding of different subjects, students take ownership of their learning process and create learning opportunities for themselves. More specifically in this case, we can also observe that (and how) students are able to do so, even when their L2 repertoire is apparently somewhat limited. That is, they can draw upon nonverbal resources in order to act out a hypothetical scenario which they may not yet have the linguistic resources to describe.

Additionally, in this sequence, T responds to the learner initiative through the use of an 'embodied enactment as explanation', as shown through the analysis of Extract 2. Extract 2 indicates that T employs embodied enactment to create an imaginary context to facilitate S3's understanding of the usage of 'sorry', and allow S3 to experience and engage in an imagined outside-of-the-classroom scenario. In order to perform the embodied enactment, T first physically and verbally displays that a change in 'interactive footing' (Goodwin 2006) is imminent, and then invites S3 to participate in the enactment. In offering a verbal and physical representation of bumping into S3, T is able to circumvent possible limitations in comprehension of abstract explanations, and to observe how the target phrase 'sorry' can be used in a real-life situation.

It should also be emphasised that this embodied enactment emerges contingently, following the learner initiative in the form of an embodied enactment; one

cannot know whether the teacher would have employed this explanatory practice had the student not done so in raising the question in the first instance. This also highlights the concept of reciprocity in classroom discourse as Mehan (1979: 77) suggested that ‘behaviour between participants is not unidirectional, it is reciprocal. Students not only are influenced by the teacher; they influence the teacher in turn’. That is to say, the learner initiatives can affect teacher’s vocabulary explanations to the students (and the form those explanations take) and such contingencies are jointly negotiated by the teacher and students on a turn-by-turn, action-by-action, basis.

Similarly, Extract 3 indicates that T offers additional vocabulary explanations about the usage of 'excuse me' to the class after S3 uninvitedly repeats the phrase to illustrate her current understanding of the meaning of ‘excuse me’. T again enacts an imaginary everyday scenario, and invites S3 to participate. As in the previous case, this provides S3 with the opportunity to see how the target term – ‘excuse me’ – can be appropriately employed in everyday life outside of the language classroom. Most importantly, it is noticeable that, in Extract 4, S3 actually participates in the enactment more actively, this time producing a response to the ‘excuse me’ request. Further, this response is something of a ‘breach’ of social norms, indicating the student’s use of humour in the classroom, and also, by producing this request rejection as humorous, displaying an understanding of what would be normatively expected, and therefore, in turn, an understanding of the pedagogical aim of teacher. This learner initiative motivates T to respond to S3’s enactment by exploiting the use of humour. These examples demonstrate that multimodal resources including gestures and body movements can play a role in assisting students in learning L2 vocabulary and phrases. Further, we argue, this might be especially so in beginner-level language lessons, when shared linguistic resources may still be somewhat limited.

As others (e.g. Sert 2017; Sert and Walsh 2013; Waring et al. 2013) have argued, using various embodied resources in explanation sequences is an important and effective pedagogical tool for teachers to explain the contextually relevant meaning of the target words and facilitate students' understanding. However, we argue that our findings also differ from Sert's (2017) notion of 'embodied explanations' as the notion only conceptualises verbal explanations aided by gestural conduct. Our findings reveal that the teacher does not merely use gestures and bodily conduct to provide vocabulary explanations. In offering explanations to a student through the embodied enactment of imaginary everyday scenarios, the teacher is doing something more than simply using her body to emphasise pronunciation or add visual description of a concept (as previous researchers have so skilfully demonstrated) – she is physically creating a situational context for students to understand how the target language can be used in specific contexts, and thus bridging the gap between classroom interaction, and real-life L2 use.

### ***Pedagogical Implications***

More broadly, our analytic observations reveal how T treats learner initiatives as teaching and learning opportunities. These observations demonstrate that, unlike findings of other studies (e.g. He 2004; Fagan 2013), the teacher in our data does not bypass or hurriedly address learner initiatives. Rather, T treats these initiatives as indicators of students' (non)understanding of the pedagogical content and incorporates them into the lesson plan to allow further discussions on the topic as a way to provide learning opportunities. Again, it is noticeable that T responds contingently and employs embodied enactments effectively to offer explanations to S3 as an attempt to fine-tune the previous input, enhance its comprehensibility and facilitate understanding.

Through examining teacher's use of embodied enactments in addressing learner initiatives in the classroom and its influence on subsequent student talk, this study adds to the current increase in literature on teacher responses to learner initiatives. The findings enhance our understanding of the collaboratively negotiated nature of classroom interaction, and, in particular, the findings offer new perspectives into the role of embodied enactments in the L2 classrooms through conducting fine-grained analysis of classroom interaction, and reveal that physically enacting a hypothetical scenario is one way to, apparently, respond effectively to learner initiatives. Further, we also argue that the analysis shows that using embodied enactments spontaneously and creatively can (1) allow for potential limitations in the students' target linguistic repertoire, and (2) shape the classroom talk in way which creates a more dynamic and contingent classroom environment to facilitate students' participation and learning.

### ***Future Directions***

This study reinforces the need for future L2 acquisition research to analyse classroom interaction which moves from the analysis of traditional IRF sequence and the notion of the teacher being an authoritative figure in the classroom in creating learning opportunities, towards the notion that the creation of learning opportunities as a joint enterprise, through which the teacher and students jointly negotiate interactional space for further learner initiatives and, ultimately, learning opportunities. In particular, this study emphasises the need for future research to consider the potential role of embodied enactments in creating language learning opportunities in the classroom.

**Word Count:** 8346

## Notes

1. ESOL classes are designed for learners, whose L1 is not English, learning English in an English-speaking country.
2. The Portland State ESOL Lab School classes are the two lowest levels of ESOL offered through Portland Community College: Level A (beginning, student performance level 0-2) and Level B (high beginning, student performance level 2-3) (Reder, 2005). The segment of data chosen for this study was collected from a Level A ESOL beginning classroom.
3. We adopt a transcription system which has been developed from the original CA Jeffersonian system (e.g. 2004). It is now commonly used by CA researchers employing a 'multimodal analysis', by including descriptions of embodied conduct, as well as screengrabs of relevant actions captured in the video recordings. A '+' symbol indicates when the onset of the non-verbal action coincides with the talk (see Mondada 2018 for a further discussion of multimodal transcripts).

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